

United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service

Aviation Safety Alert

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Subject: Use of Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE)

Area of Concern: ATGS, Fire Recon/Detection Mission

Distribution: Fire and Aviation Personnel

Discussion: Recent accident investigations have revealed that personnel are choosing inappropriate dress while acting as an air crew member during Air Attack, Fire Reconnaissance and Detection missions; it is common to observe employees in casual dress (shorts and sandals) while performing as an air crew member on these missions.

The Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations chapter 17-18 states that for fixed wing operations above 500 feet PPE is recommended. This is our current policy, which will be reviewed prior to the 2006 fire season.

In the interim it is strongly recommended that personnel performing these missions protect themselves from potential and unnecessary injury by wearing leather shoes or boots with a flight suit, full length cotton clothing or cotton shirt with nomex trousers.

Recent events have also highlighted the positive effects of fully utilizing shoulder harnesses. Policy on the use of seat belts and harnesses may be found in FSH 5709.16 32.24, Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) 91.107, and the Aviation Life Support Equipment Handbook 4-4.2. Each of these directives requires that if the aircraft is equipped, then the safety belt and harness must be worn.

Incidents and accidents, although rare, do occur. The current accident rate for fixed wing aircraft, averaged over the last five years 4.29 per 100,000 hours. Please help yourselves be as prepared as possible in the event that you are involved in an aircraft accident.

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